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SUBJECT: DOCTOR COMPLAINS OF JAYSH AL-MAHDI "TAKEOVERS" AT
HOSPITALS

REF: BAGHDAD 2047

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR MARGARET SCOBAY, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B)
AND (D).

¶1. (C) On June 8, Dr Bashor (LNU), an emergency care physician at Karama hospital (located in the Saliya neighborhood near the IZ), complained to Poloff that Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) militia hospital "takeovers" have become common practice in several hospitals across Baghdad, including his own. The takeovers, Dr. Bashor alleged, occur when JAM members have been injured in action and are in need of medical attention. Dr. Bashor said that medical personnel are afraid to publicly complain because of a common belief that many Facility Protection Staff (FPS) guarding the hospital themselves moonlight as JAM members.

¶2. (C) In one instance, May 14, Dr. Bashor said that his hospital was flooded with JAM members after an injured associate was brought into the hospital. When Poloff asked how he knew the incoming person was JAM, Bashor replied that the patient in question himself admitted to being JAM and told his caretakers he was injured in a "raid" on a house. Dr. Bashor said that as soon as this particular patient was brought in, large numbers of JAM stormed the hospital, fanning out to each floor and roughly commanding doctors to the care of their injured associate.

¶3. (C) Astounded by the sheer number of JAM members that had taken over the hospital, the doctor called the Iraqi Police (IP) and Iraqi Army (IA). IA finally showed up after two hours, according to Dr. Bashor, but refused to evict any of the JAM. "They simply watched as JAM commanded the hospital." This type of event, he said, has been a common occurrence at Karama hospital, and at other hospitals. Dr. Bashor told Poloff that colleagues at Baghdad's Yarmouk hospital indicate that JAM-style "take-overs" have also occurred there. "We are too afraid to respond to these situations", he said, "other than through the media or the international community". Bashor claimed that it was well-known among medical staff that the FPS are infiltrated by JAM.

¶4. (C) Dr. Bashor further reported that several Baghdad hospitals have become dangerous places for Sunni Arabs. Dr. Bashor, himself a Sunni, pointed to al-Noor hospital, where he claimed family members on their way to visit family members or picking up deceased are known to disappear and later reappear dead. Dr. Bashor noted that consequently many bodies have remained uncollected at Al-Noor hospital, which is located in front of an al-Sadr office.

¶5. (C) Comment: We have heard from other Baghdad Sunni residents who are afraid of picking up their family members' remains from morgues for fear of being targeted there (as elsewhere) by Jaysh al-Mahdi. Bashor's account runs parallel

to other reports such as that of the recent abduction of the Tawafuq nominee for Deputy Minister of Health while he was visiting the Sadrist-run Health Ministry (reftel).

SPECKHARD